

Whole body cryotherapy in cryo-chamber for treating multiple sclerosis

Multiple sclerosis, a disease of the central nervous system that is also probably based on autoimmune processes, is characterized by a large number of symptoms that frequently change in incidence and intensity. They can occur in bouts, also with regression of symptoms, or they may continuously grow in intensity unabated. Multiple sclerosis is also untreatable at its root cause, and can only be treated symptomatically. Much data has reported time and time again that cold is perceived as providing a feeling of well-being. General well-being can be improved. Starting from this and considering the positive effect of extreme cold on the spastic musculature, a number of cryotherapy centers already began several years ago with treating multiple sclerosis using whole body cold applications. A number of clinical observations have now been published that underline the positive effect of cold. The results can be described as follows:

- The status after whole body cold action is described as pleasant.
- The entire spectrum of complaints is relieved.
- One feels stronger, fatigues less quickly and is mentally more active.
- Spasms are reduced, gymnastic exercises can be carried out more precisely.
- The motor system, perambulation and mobility are improved. Disturbances in equilibrium are reduced.
- Pains are eased or even eliminated. This mainly concerns secondary pain that primarily arises from postural troubles of the spine, muscular straining and inordinate stressing of the joints.
- The afflicted individuals refer to the state achieved after a cold therapy as a clear increase in quality of life.

One can assume that such a therapeutic outcome can be attributed to the described multi-component effect of whole body cryotherapy (influencing of central activity level, regulation of muscular actions, inflammation inhibition, pain relief).

According to previous experience whole body cryotherapy should be given twice a year for two to three weeks, with two exposures per day, mainly in association with gymnastic exercises that specifically take account of the individual symptomatology. The recommendation for the therapeutic course should be based on the knowledge that the improvement in state is approximately linearly related to the duration of therapy, i.e. two to three weeks. Although shorter cold treatments can also produce already good successes, one should be aware that they do not achieve all that is possible. Other treatments that were already applied before should be continued. Any changes, if at all, should only be carried out after consulting the doctor.

It is of key importance to determine the individually required and tolerable dose of whole body cold depending on the ability to adequately react to the extreme stimuli. An open cooperation of the patient with the doctor is an absolute requirement for this. It must be ensured that upon improvement in condition the physical load does not exceed the range of well being. The incredible reduction in symptoms under therapy can unfortunately induce such a condition!

In April 2005 I had the occasion more or less by chance to become acquainted with members of a multiple sclerosis self-help group from Abensberg and Nuremberg who were undergoing a cold therapy at the health spa of Bad Bleiberg in Kaernten. In very pleasant and at the same time stimulating conversations I received much valuable information about the effect of whole body cryotherapy on their clinical condition. I would like to take this occasion to thank them cordially for expanding my wisdom in this area.